

POSTSCRIPT

Today's Ukraine, Tomorrow's Taiwan: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, China's Revanchism, and the Chinese Communist Party-State's Quest to Remake the World in Its Own Image

This special focus issue, *Under the Shadow of Vladimir Putin's Irredentist War: How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Impacts China's Global and Regional Relations*, represents the final issue of the eighth volume of *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* (December 2022). The twelve articles in this issue are organised into four sections, each containing three articles. The first section, *Putin's War in Ukraine: Where China Stands*, features "Chinese Strategic Relations and *Diplomatization* in the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict: Securitizing Geopolitical and Economic Interests" by Reymund B. Flores, Aaron Joseph H. Castaño and Theodore Ricardo R. Bautista, "The Russian-Ukraine War and the Chinese Propaganda Machine: Evidence from "The Great Translation Movement" on Twitter" by Chin-fu Hung, and "Trading Human Rights for Cheap Products: The Rise of China and the End of the Liberal World Order in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine War" by Hanna Samir Kassab. These are followed by another three articles grouped under the

second section, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Imminence of China's Invasion of Taiwan*: “Taiwan and the Software of War: Learning Resilience from Ukraine” by Dean Karalekas, “Lessons from, and Implications of, the Russia-Ukraine War for a Future Taiwan Strait Scenario” by Hon-min Yau, and “Mainland China on a Tightrope: Lessons for Its Taiwan Reunification Strategies in the Context of the Latest Russian Attack on Ukraine” by Diosdado B. Lopega. The journal issue’s focus then moves beyond China’s strategic considerations and the present and imminent cross-Strait crises further to the wider Asian and global power implications with the third section, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Regional Reverberations and Foreign Policy Shifts*, featuring three articles: “The Ukraine-Russia War and Its Implications for Philippine Foreign Policy: Pushing Further to a Limited Hard Balancing Policy towards China” by Renato Cruz De Castro, “China’s Landmass and Maritime Relations on the Edges: The Implications of Russia-Ukraine Conflict on the Cases of Kazakhstan and the Philippines” by Aliya Peleo and Hugo Tierny, and “Putin’s War and Shifts in the European Union-Russia-China Strategic Triangle: Quo Vadis Eurasian Connectivity?” by Reinhard Biedermann. These are followed by three further articles under the fourth section, *Putin's War in Ukraine: Impacts on Great Power Relations*: “The Role and Effects of the Russian-Ukrainian War in the Geopolitical Rivalry of the US and China: The Unfolding Thucydides Trap” by Szilárd Boros, “The Impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on Sino-German Relations” by Marian Ehret and Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, and “Deglobalization and China’s Reaction to the Process in the Light of the Ukrainian War” by Csaba Moldicz.

The first section of this journal issue, *Putin's War in Ukraine: Where China Stands*, looks at how the Chinese Communist Party-State positions the country it currently rules with an iron fist amidst the

unfolding Russian invasion of Ukraine, the reasons for its stance, its domestic and foreign policy considerations and its action's paramount rationale – for the perpetuation of its brutal, repressive and dictatorial stranglehold over political power in China.

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine approaches a full year, it is becoming clearer through the Putin administration's rhetoric that the essential reason for its war against Ukraine is the fact that the increasingly repressive authoritarian Putin regime is finding irredentist nationalism with nostalgic claim on Soviet lost lands, especially within the Kievan Rus' heartland, is impressively useful in rallying support from Russian voter-citizens, and the post-Orange Revolution Ukraine drifting away from Russian influence towards the liberal democratic Europe of the European Union (EU) is posing a grave threat to the authoritarian Putin regime's increasingly repressive stranglehold on Russian political power, in stark parallel to the East Asian scene where a vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan has become an increasingly pain-in-the-neck contrast in the eyes of the brutal, repressive Chinese Communist Party (CCP)¹ dictatorship of mainland China. Definitely becoming the mortal worries of the repressive Putin regime of post-Communist Russia and the brutal Communist Party dictatorship of mainland China is the fact that behind both Ukraine's Orange Revolution (which bears a striking similarity to the now legendary People's Power revolution of the Philippines that overthrew the Ferdinand Marcos regime) and the amazing transition to liberal democracy in Taiwan during the later part of the Chiang Ching-kuo administration (and looking north, South Korea's transition away from military dictatorship towards the end of the Chun Doo-hwan presidency), the shadow of the United States of America and her European allies' influence and support were clearly evident – and as the CCP regime had observed, it was also clear the U.S. and her European

allies were equally behind Hong Kong's civil disobedience from the Umbrella Movement to the anti-extradition-to-China protests where many protestors were receiving not only moral and material support but even tactical trainings from American and European civil rights groups. This is the main factor behind Communist China's current strong support for the Putin presidency. Clearly this is a mainly tactical alliance of two repressive regimes supporting each other's survival against the threat from the liberal democratic world, as the historical territorial grievances are supposed to have go against this alliance if the CCP regime were to stay true to its relentless brainwashing of its subject people with ultra-nationalism anchored on the "Hundred Years of National Humiliation". This convoluted stance of the CCP is the subject of discussion of the three papers that begin this journal issue's first section, *Putin's War in Ukraine: Where China Stands*.

Undoubtedly from the perspective of demography and ethnicity, there are a lot of grey areas in both the Russia-Ukraine and mainland China-Taiwan relations. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union – in 1991 with Ukraine and the other 13 republics gaining independence from the Russian-dominated USSR Communist Party empire (technically Russia herself also gained "independence" from her post-Tsarist Soviet Union empire), the political, cultural, and economic boundaries between Ukraine (and Belarus) and Russia was at first blurry, especially for the people living on frontiers both sides of the border, who live almost as a community. This was very similar to the China-Taiwan case, except for the state of war that technically still exists between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait, as the politically repressive Kuomintang (KMT) regime from 1949 to mid-1980s remained an exiled mainland China political force, and the exiled mainland population, hardly reaching one fifth of the island's population, made the island only their temporary abode, while waiting

for KMT to re-conquer the mainland. The majority of the local inhabitants (mainly with Hoklo/Minnan and Hakka ancestry) were brutally subjugated, ever since the 228 Massacre, and subjected to indoctrination to inculcate or strengthen their loyalty to China – albeit that was the “Republic of China” with Taiwan as a province under the Kuomintang state-of-war Marshall Law dictatorial rule.

In Ukraine, came 2004, under increasing anxiety with the repressive Putin regime’s cross-border manipulation of their national elections getting more and more blatant, the Ukrainians defended their sovereignty and freedom and protested against voting fraud. An Orange Revolution – the latest in the series of the so-called Colour Revolutions that swept through the post-Soviet Communist states – broke out, resulting in the defeat of the existing regime’s candidate, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, in a presidential election claimed to be marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation and electoral fraud and rigged by the authorities in favour of the prime minister. Due to the nationwide protests, the questionable results of the original run-off were annulled, and a second run-off was conducted under intense scrutiny by domestic and international observers, resulting in a clear victory for the prime minister’s opponent Viktor Yushchenko, thus beginning the irrevocable deterioration in Moscow-Kyiv relations. However, In the 2010 presidential election, Viktor Yanukovich managed to return to power but after a series of policies aiming at moving away from the EU for closer integration with Russia, and with his years in power characterized by democratic backsliding, the jailing of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko whom he defeated in the 2010 presidential election, a decline in press freedom coupled with increase in cronyism and corruption, and was ousted from power in the Revolution of Dignity four years later following the February 2014 Euromaidan clashes in Kyiv’s Independence Square which resulted in more than 100 deaths in the

government's crackdown on protesters. This second revolution saw the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich, who then fled into exile in Russia, and a return to the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine, but eventually it also led to the present Russian invasion of Ukraine.

As a parallel to this, mainland China-Taiwan relations also went abruptly into an irrevocable downward spiral with the KMT losing the majority electorate's support after the local Taiwanese's increasing anxiety over the KMT's steering the island state closer and closer to the CCP regime – that over-integration economically with the mainland might result in the repressive dictatorial giant, beyond notorious in human rights abuses. Such worries that over-integration economically across the Strait might lead to the notoriously human-rights-abusive mainland CCP dictatorship annexing the vibrantly liberal democratic, human rights-respecting, independent island state by stealth eventually triggered the tumultuous Sunflower Movement that paved the way for the Independence-minded localist-inclined Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) back to control of the presidency and the legislature. The consequential two-terms (8 years) of the strong-willed, global-oriented Tsai Ing-wen presidency rekindled the hope and zeal of the majority of the Taiwanese people for freedom and ethnic autonomy, and of the localists for an eventual breakthrough of a de jure independent state with an independent seat in the United Nations, whether she be simply Taiwan, or the Republic of Taiwan, or the Taiwan Republic of China, or the Chinese Republic of Taiwan.

This situation raised great alarm in mainland China's CCP dictatorship, whose international clout has already been long worsened by the decade's deterioration in China-U.S. and China-West European relations accentuated by strained trade relations, alleged CCP regime's technology theft, CCP regime's strong expansion of its international influence and its authoritarian ruling model into the developing

countries, the inhumanity prevailed in the suppression of, not only democracy activism, unofficial trade unionism and civil rights lawyers in general, but also brutal suppression of Tibetans' and Uyghurs' struggle for freedom and ethnoterritorial autonomy, and in the case of the Uyghurs, with the creation of the almost unbelievable million-people strong brutal concentration camps of ideological indoctrination for assimilation bordering on cultural genocide. Increasingly leaving the island state of Taiwan in the hands of the independence-minded government voted in by the majority of the Taiwanese people, both as a beacon and model of hope for freedom and prosperity in the eyes of the politically suppressed, civil rights-abused mainland people – at least those who are better educated, having a broader and more cosmopolitan worldview and on whom the CCP State's ultra-nationalistic brainwashing and censorship have not been successful – and as a conduit where the human rights-respecting liberal democratic ideals of the U.S. and Europe could influence and infiltrate the mainland (a scenario recently seen in Hong Kong, but which could be worse than Hong Kong if that involves the liberal democratic world's armed support for Taiwan) is becoming a potential time bomb for the survival of the CCP dictatorship on the mainland, especially in the potential possibility of mainland China's economy going into a decline.

On the other hand, annexing Taiwan by military force may look attractive and even rally support from the mainland China masses long brainwashed by extreme State censorship of information and by ultra-nationalist indoctrination, if a “peaceful” means of annexation by stealth – especially by influencing the democratic process and political change in Taiwan – (like in Ukraine before the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution and between the Orange Revolution and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity / Maidan Revolution) fails, assuming that the liberal democratic West has no stomach for a costly – in terms of lost in human life too – support

to defend Taiwan. To this subject turns the attention of this journal issue's second section, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Imminence of China's Invasion of Taiwan*.

An important question is of course how far Taiwan's U.S. ally and the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are willing to help defend Taiwan – risking high troop casualties on their part – against a military invasion from China which is a nuclear power. The stakes are high. Is the loss of American and European lives worth it? The so-far successful defence of Ukraine with arms but not U.S. or NATO troops might have pointed a way. But question remains about whether the Taiwanese have the determination, like the Ukrainians are doing now with huge loss of lives, to defend the independent island state's freedom and democracy, given that many on the island are not adverse to the prospect of unification, especially among the part of population who find partial subjugation under a "One Country Two Systems" preferable to fighting and dying (though the belief in that has received a blow after the practical death of that promise in Hong Kong after Beijing imposed the National Security Law for Hong Kong on the former British crown colony), and those who still believe in the workability of the Consensus '92 that peace can be maintained (allowed by the giant CCP mainland regime) with the unspoken self-recognition of a separate China in the name of Republic of China.

On the other hand, the record of American and NATO military intervention around the world in recent history have been mixed. While the U.S.'s pivotal role in the creation of the NATO in 1949 has proven to be successful in checking the global expansion of repressive Communist Party dictatorships, many brutal or even genocidal, and in eventually bringing about the collapse of the Communist Party dictatorships in the Soviet Union – with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev's political reform as a catalyst – and its satellite states from Eastern Europe to Mongolia,

the untold misery and resentment of the people ruled by the brutal tin-pot dictators and military juntas supported by Washington around the world under the Kirkpatrick Doctrine (authoritarianism can be reformed, influenced to democratise later while totalitarianism, being more self-perpetuating and influential, cannot; stopping the Red Tide first, influencing democratic change later – for democratic change may bring about immediate take-over by the left-wing political forces by vote, whose Marxist ideology had such a charm over young idealist of that era who were so frustrated by the greed and corruption of the elite and impoverishment of the farmers and workers brought about by Western colonialism and unfettered capitalist exploitation.

While the U.S. and her allies under the aegis of the United Nations Command managed to rescue South Korea from Communist North Korea's invasion (militarily supported by North Korea's totalitarian patrons China and USSR with troops and weapons respectively), with tremendous loss of lives on both sides, and eventually, four decades later, successfully steering South Korea's transition from repressive strongman dictatorships to full liberal democracy (in a way a late-coming vindication of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine as some may wish to interpret), the Vietnam War, also with heavy casualties on both sides, had turned out to be a disaster for the U.S. that was forced to support one after another autocratic, corrupt and inept administrations in South Vietnam deeply resented by the common people, just like the Chiang Kai-shek regime on mainland China before the Communist takeover. Without enough years to steer these regimes towards eventual democratisation, the U.S. military might alone was not adequate to stop Communist Party totalitarian forces – which have popular support from the working class, the peasants, the young intellectuals and the larger society who were intoxicated with the ideals of an egalitarian society promised by Marxist socialism but unable to foresee the even more

brutal totalitarian state it would in reality lead to, one ironically much more brutal and inhuman than the perceived corrupt capitalist structure they had set their minds on overthrowing – from taking over the whole of Vietnam and the rest of Indochina, with the resultant sea-borne massacre when over a million Vietnamese fled in rickety boats to escape political persecution and inhuman collectivisation among whom between 200,000 and 400,000 perished in the high sea, and the shocking genocidal “killing fields” of Cambodia where the Khmer Rouge took the lives of at least close to 2 million innocent civilians by execution, starvation and hard labour in its efforts to create a new people for its Marxist Utopian vision of the new totalitarian “Democratic Kampuchea”.

While the U.S.’s 1980s military intervention in Grenada and Panama had managed to restore stable democracy, her 1990s Gulf War and support for the Arab Spring and 2000s War on Terror had only had debatable success, though U.S.-led NATO’s military intervention to stop the militant Serbs’ ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo has been critically successful in saving tens of thousands of lives from genocide. The dramatic overthrow of long-ruling brutal dictators across Arab lands and of the harsh misogynist religious obscurantist regime in Afghanistan, while so far not being successful to bring long-term stable democracy due variously to new corrupt local leaderships, lack of social cohesion in these divisive tribal societies and the strong militant religious obscurantist forces, murderously intolerant of both religious diversity and secularism, often with strong popular support, that had risen to the surface hijacking the revolutionary movements, had somehow sowed seeds of the liberal democratic tradition of human rights-protection in these post-dictatorship states, and the destruction of Al-Qaeda and then the Islamic State power – which at the regional level, had rescued thousands of people of the minorities including the Yazidis

from massacres and religiously sanctioned subjugation and sexual enslavement – has so far given the world, from Africa to Southeast Asia, from Europe to North America, more than two decades of respite from large-scale devastation and human casualties being committed by religious fundamentalist terrorist forces since the 911 Terror Attack and the Bali bombing.

However, unlike those regions mentioned above where the U.S. and NATO has previously militarily involved themselves, Taiwan is a prosperous country, about the geographical size of the Netherlands and population size of Australia, with one of world's most vibrant functioning liberal democracy whose economic strength is roughly equivalent to Sweden, per capita GDP to Germany, size of imports about the level of Switzerland and exports Spain, which is constantly under threat from a military invasion from mainland China's Communist Army (euphemistical still called "People's Liberation Army" even after slaughtering thousands of civilians in 1989 Beijing Massacre in serving to maintain the perpetual unchallenged rule of the Communist Party dictatorship) and annexation by mainland China's CCP regime, one the world's most brutal, repressive dictatorships. The liberal democratic world's resolve in defending this prosperous and vibrantly liberal democratic island state from the dictatorship across the Strait can be loud and unequivocal, as the people's political freedom and civil liberties, freedom of expression and free press, and freedom from the State's rule-by-law prosecution (instead of rule of law), have already become the global norm after the end of the Cold War and fall of the repressive Communist Party dictatorship from Eastern Europe to Russia to Mongolia, in an era where without the huge threat from behind the Iron Curtain policies twisted by the Kirkpatrick Doctrine are no longer pertinent, and most authoritarian states once ruled by military juntas or tin-pot dictators from Latin America to Africa, from Northeast Asia to

Southeast Asia (including South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines) had long transitioned from dictatorships to vibrant liberal democracies. Today's world is thus much less dubious than previously during the Cold War. Even the remaining major Communist Party dictatorship, China's CCP regime, has to constantly resort to repeated lame shop-worn Soviet-era *tu quoque* whataboutism, as well as cloak its *raison d'être* in heavy doses of the nomenklatura conspiracy, re-branding ("with Chinese characteristics") such terms like human rights and democracy with endless warped definitions – lame as it is, this perversion of language has somehow been critically instrumental in the terrifying *saturnic* power (with a long-term toxicity far beyond the conventional *s* terms of "soft", "smart" or "sharp" power in international relations theoretical constructs) of a totalitarian ruling regime, the low poisoning of the mind, which is gradually, but effectively, after subjecting a whole generation to relentless, brutal brainwashing, enforced amnesia and stringent censorship, leading down the road of the tragic closing of the Chinese mind in serving a brazen regime's perpetuating its political power monopoly through domestic repression and external propaganda.²

The major source of the dramatic change in Ukrainian-Russian relationship lies in Russia's nonstop meddling in Ukrainian political affairs including the Kyiv central State relations with its highly Russified eastern regions (the Donbas). On the eve of the 2004 Ukrainian general election, Putin went to Kiev in person, confidently promoting his favourite Yanukovich (who was up against his opponent Yushchenko). Unsurprisingly, sovereignty- and independence-minded Ukrainians were outraged by Putin's grandiose interference in their country's elections. To Putin, Ukrainians' aspiration for self-determination was tantamount to a betrayal of Mother Russia. Disregarding Ukraine's post-Soviet Union status as a sovereign, independent nation, Putin accused the West

Europeans and Americans of supporting Ukraine's "colour revolution" (even though their support then for the "Orange Revolution" was just verbal – a moral support at best of Ukrainian's determination to embrace freedom and democracy, and against the return to authoritarianism), and equated that support to an act of international aggression, a serious hostility to Russia, and an interference in Russia's internal affairs, as Putin gradually gave up all restraints on pronouncing his view that denies Ukraine as an independent country.

But the tide of democracy and freedom can never be fully turned back. It may ebb and flow, but it moves on. Even if Russian influence and manipulation manages to return Yanukovich to power, the Ukrainian society has changed – similar to what the return of the formerly autocratic KMT rule in Taiwan under Ma Ying-jeou has seen in Taiwan society that had already had a taste in freedom from oppression. The people's aspiration for freedom and autonomy has already strengthened, and the media has already shaken off its former yoke of subservience and government censorship. Like the CCP regime, the increasingly repressive Putin regime that has been subverting Russia's hard-won post-Soviet democratic structure is experiencing an "impending Colour Revolution" anxiety – "Colour Revolution" that both the Putin regime and CCP dictatorship have loudly accused, actually not too off the mark, the liberal democratic West of instigating. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, of Crimea in 2014, and of the whole Ukraine in 2022 are the natural manifestations of such an anxiety.

The Ukrainian people hope to embrace the type of liberal democracy, the hallmark of Western Europe post-WWII, that has already accepted by the East European ex-satellite states of the defunct Soviet Union, to join the EU for economic advancement and the NATO for military protection, to move further away from the corrupt and repressive legacy of the Soviet Union – not least fuelled by the painful

memory of the Holodomor – the Soviet-Communist-State-induced Terror-Famine in 1932-33 that took the lives of 7 to 10 million Ukrainians which bordered on genocide, as well as the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown.

However, to the Putin regime, allowing the Ukrainian people to move further away from the Great Russian fraternity towards a liberal democratic Western European identity is disastrous for it shows the Russian electorates that a non-strong-man liberal democratic political order is possible for the Slavonic people. If the human-rights-respecting liberal democratic system could thrive among the “Little Russians” (Ukrainians, and Belarussians), it could also work for the Great Russians. If the aftermath of the Orange Revolution is allowed to stabilise into paving the way to liberal democratic prosperity and a stronger pan-European Ukrainian identity away from the traditional Great Russian-Little Russian fraternity, it will irrevocably pose a mortal threat to the Putin regime’s reversion to corrupt autocratic rule in the post-Soviet Russia, and that will also discourage other East European countries from following the Putin road. The success of the Orange Revolution in propelling Ukraine towards a stable liberal democratic order would become a much needed boost to further proliferation of “colour revolutions” in those post-Communist states suffering from authoritarian reversion, and as the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship has repeatedly been warning Putin, the liberal democratic West will continue to utilise “colour revolution” to topple both authoritarian-reverted post-Soviet regimes and the CCP dictatorship and the authoritarian regimes of its client states and others propped up by the CCP regime in Southeast Asia and beyond. Such a “colour revolution” is scaring the CCP to death, and the vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan nation across the Taiwan Strait facing its Fujian Province is now more and more like China’s own Ukraine both as the liberal democratic

West's unsinkable aircraft carrier just at its doorstep and a beacon of guidance to dissident forces on the mainland in their aspiration for a colour revolution to liberate the Chinese people from yoke of the Communist Party dictatorship. In this context, surrendering democratic Ukraine to an invasion from a repressive authoritarian Russian regime is a sacrilege – an acquiescent that a people choosing their own destiny to freedom and democracy have no rights to do so, that they have no rights for self-determination, that they have no rights for arranging a democratic arrangement between ethnoregional areas in the country without being forced to give up those areas by an external invasion force.

However, the post-Soviet Russia now fuelled by the Putin regime's irredentist ultra-nationalist revisionist propaganda has never been able to accept that Ukraine, a captive nation of the former Soviet Union empire, determines to move towards liberal democracy and allied itself with the liberal democratic West signified by EU and NATO. Once becoming truly liberal democratic, coming hand in hand with it will be spirit of independence and self-determination, and the with more independence and self-determination, it will be more completely different from Russia's autocratic regression under Putin. The same applies to Taiwan. And Hong Kong too. The free world has lost Hong Kong. The liberal democratic world has betrayed Hong Kong. The liberal democratic world has largely turned a blind eye, with empty words and no action, to continuing atrocious human rights abuses in China, to crime against humanity in the Uyghur region. In a sense, Ukraine has become the sacrificial lamb that has opened the eyes of the world to the danger of an appeasement approach towards abusive authoritarian regimes. The Russian invasion has caused policy shift and mentality change globally among liberal democratic nations, especially in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic and Caucasus, and East and Southeast

Asia. The above concerns form the focus of journal issue's third section, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Regional Reverberations and Foreign Policy Shifts*.

It is interesting to note that Putin actually expressed interest in joining NATO when talking to George Robertson when the latter was secretary general of NATO in early 2000s but was unwilling to queue in an application process together with other countries which he considered inferior to Russia,³ and had told David Frost in a BBC interview shortly before he was first inaugurated as Russian president more than two decades ago that he would not rule out joining NATO which was hard for him to visualise as an enemy, as he considered Russia part of the European culture and hence could not imagine Russia "in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilised world."⁴ Thus it has been with the deepening of authoritarianism increasingly characterizing the rule of a leader who was constantly worried about being swept away from power and privilege if the democratic process were to be respected to run its proper course in Russia. This is same worry that has plagued the mindset of China's CCP regime ever since the Beijing Massacre of 1989 when the Communist Party army ("People's Liberation Army") killed thousands of unarmed protesters and other civilians supporting and protecting them).

Despite all of Communist China's whataboutism rhetoric, all the regular attacks on the liberal democratic West from the New Left, the shortcomings in democratic credentials and all the social malaise in individual countries, the historical guilt of sins committed on the negative side of colonialism by the now disintegrated Western maritime colonialism (while Russian and Chinese land-based colonisation continues as "domestic affairs"), the human rights-respecting liberal democratic values that come with the global expansion of the system of North Atlantic liberal democracy cannot be denied, or simply dismissed

as just episodes of great power rivalry. Losing Taiwan will be a great disaster, not just in terms of international *Realpolitik* wherein losing the defence of the first island chain will result in endangering the military supremacy of the American-led West in the Pacific, but most importantly in terms of a boost in the global influence of authoritarianism that has been on the alarming rise in recent years, with the notoriously repressive Chinese Communist Party dictatorship subjugating and annexing a vibrantly free and open society of human-rights-respecting liberal democratic Taiwan. If that happens, it will be an unprecedented high-impact invasion by autocratic Beijing since the 1959 military invasion and colonisation of Tibet by the CCP regime, or further back in time, the ethnic genocidal 1756-58 invasion and obliteration of both state and people of Dzungaria by the China's Manchu imperial central State (after the successful military invasion of Outer Mongolia in 1723-24) with massacre of the majority of the Dzungar population and the enslavement or banishment of the remainder, which began the complete colonisation of largely what has today become the Xinjiang region of China. The same fate awaits the Taiwanese – as the boorish Chinese ambassador to France Lu Shaye has pronounced: “The Taiwanese people will be re-educated after reunification”,⁵ thus bringing in the chilling undertone of an impending fate as those million Uyghur people have suffered, being dragged into the Xinjiang concentration camps in recently years under Xi Jinping's rule.

The ideological clash is similarly manifest in Eastern Europe. While Ukraine is moving further to more fully embrace liberal democracy, the more authoritarian Russia has become under Putin, who has imposed an increasingly ruthless, repressive and even murderous (assassination of exiled dissidents, a common practice during Soviet Communist rule, has seen a revival, like the coming back of psychiatric hospital detention of dissidents and re-education gulags that characterised today's atrociously

repressive CCP regime in China). Such repressive rule is to ensure that the liberal democratic atmosphere outside Russia, especially in its next-door states including Ukraine will not spread into Russia. Sabotaging the liberal democratic transition in Russia's ex-Soviet "near abroad" on the European and Caucasus side – in particular Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia – by meddling in their internal political process, has become imperative for the survival of the increasingly repressive and autocratic Putin regime, and if that action fails, under the logic of "offence is the best defence" the so-called "special military operation" became necessary, taking advantage of the intricate ethnoregional fabric of the Russophone regions of these post-Soviet nations. Heavily resorted to has been the active covert support for the pro-Russian faction in Ukrainian, Moldavian and Georgian political landscapes to sow seeds of social division and fan internal strife, aided by a deluge of anti-liberal-democratic-West disinformation (tactics long utilized by the former Soviet Union's Communist Party regime, and today by the CCP dictatorship to disparage the liberal democratic West and promote the autocratic "China model"), and if all these fail, outright invasion becomes a final resort, before Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia become more fully liberal democratic and join the EU and NATO and come under the protective umbrella of the latter. If the Putin regime were to succeed in this invasion of Ukraine, his gameplan will become a perfect model playbook for the CCP regime towards Taiwan, as what has been laid out in the above exposition finds indeed an almost perfect East Asian parallel in Communist Party dictatorship-ruled China's view of the "Taiwan threat" it is facing. Such concerns constitute the focus of the journal issue's fourth and last section, *Putin's War in Ukraine: Impacts on Great Power Relations*.

Before ending this postscript, we would like to thank all the contributing authors of the articles in the various sections of this journal

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Notes

1. Or officially the “Communist Party of China” (CPC).
2. Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh (2020), “From the Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests to China’s Wuhan novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak: Implications of two crises for the Chinese Communist Party’s governance model”, *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3, December 2020, pp. 1231-1442 <[https://icaps.nsysu.edu.tw/static/file/131/1131/img/CCPS6\(3\)-yeoh-postsript0706.pdf](https://icaps.nsysu.edu.tw/static/file/131/1131/img/CCPS6(3)-yeoh-postsript0706.pdf)> <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ue73c5u6iioj4u2/CCPS-V6N3-yeoh-postsript.pdf>>.

3. “Ex-Nato head says Putin wanted to join alliance early on in his rule”, *The Guardian* (UK), 4th November 2021 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/04/ex-nato-head-says-putin-wanted-to-join-alliance-early-on-in-his-rule#:~:text=George%20Robertson%2C%20a%20former%20Labour,the%20time%2CE2%80%9D%20he%20said>>.
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. “China would re-educate Taiwan in event of reunification, Ambassador says”, *Newsweek* (US), 5th August 2022 <<https://www.newsweek.com/china-reeducate-taiwan-reunification-ambassador-1731141>>; “Chinese envoy to France Lu Shaye doubles down on Taiwan ‘re-education’ aims”, *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), 8th August 2022 <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3188192/chinese-envoy-france-lu-shaye-doubles-down-taiwan-re-education>>.
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Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal

Volume 8

Number 2

August 2022

ISSN 2410-9681

- | | |
|--|-----|
| China and the BIMP-EAGA Cooperation: Progress and Challenges
<i>Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat</i> | 199 |
| Xi Jinping's Ideology: A Hybrid between Marxism and Nationalism
<i>Elpeni Fitrah</i> | 226 |
| Analyzing China-U.S. Relations in the Eyes of Chinese Scholars through Word Frequency
<i>Gao Longxu</i> | 253 |
| Perceived Mentoring Functions, Perceived Organizational Fairness, and Turnover Intention of Firms in China: The Mediating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support
<i>Zhao Songen and Tey Lian Seng</i> | 290 |
| Working Conditions of Online Food Delivery Gig Workers from A Consumer Perspective in China: A Lesson for Malaysia
<i>Yosuke Uchiyama, Md Nasrudin Md Akhir, Yuanzhu Wang, Beatrice Lim and Khairul Hanim Pazim</i> | 324 |

Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal

Volume 8

Number 1

April 2022

ISSN 2410-9681

- The Impact of Infrastructure Investment on Economic Growth in Countries Participating in the Belt and Road Initiative: A Comparative Analysis between Africa and Asia
Mui-Yin Chin, Daniel Francois Meyer, Sheue-Li Ong and Yee-Qin Kon 1
- Interpreting Rising China and Its Impact on World Politics
Ali Abbas 44
- The Chinese Government's Response to the Online Transportation Industry: A Case Study of Uber Technology Inc.
Lili Yulyadi Arnakim and Ayu Rusdyawati 76
- Impact of Financial Literacy on Individuals' Financial Decisions: A Comparative Analysis of Eastern, Central, and Western Regions in China
Mingfeng Tang, Xiaomeng Liu, Qingchen Feng, Sonia Kumari Selvarajan, Angathevar Baskaran and Chen Yang 101
- Reading beyond the Lines of Xi Jinping's Speech: China's Leadership and Its Domestic Calculus over the Disputed Spratly Islands
Noor Hasifah Abdul Rashid, Muhammad Danial Azman, Zarina Othman and Khadijah Md Khalid 139



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